

# **Helping Hand™**

# **Epidural Catheter for Pain Control**

The doctors and nurses want to make your child's hospital stay as comfortable as possible. If your child is having pain, he or she is not able to rest and heal as quickly. One way we can help control your child's pain is to give pain medicine through an epidural catheter (ep-eh-DUR-el CATH-eh-ter).

## **Benefits of Epidural Pain Medicines**

Some benefits of having pain medicines through an epidural catheter are:

- Epidural pain medicines usually relieve pain better than injections (shots).
- Your child will be less sleepy from the pain medicine.
- Your child will not receive shots for pain control while the epidural catheter is in place.

## What Is an Epidural Catheter?

- An anesthesiologist (a doctor who puts children to sleep for their surgery) will talk with you before surgery about the possibility of epidural pain medicine and will answer any questions you may have.
- When your child is taken to the Operating Room for his or her surgery, the anesthesia staff will put a small needle into your child's back while your child is asleep. Then a tiny, flexible tube, called an epidural catheter, will be put through the needle into the child's back. Then the needle will be removed. The epidural catheter is about the size of a thick thread. The catheter will be taped into place on your child's back. After the catheter is in place, pain medicines are given through the catheter tubing. Pain can then be managed by increasing or decreasing the rate.

#### **Possible Side Effects**

Any pain medicine may cause side effects such as:

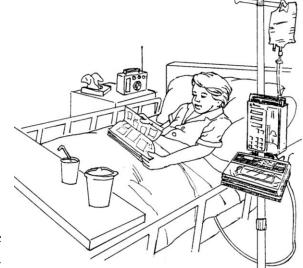
- Itching This is **not** an allergic reaction. Medicine can be given to help stop the itching.
- Nausea and vomiting There are medicines that may be used to help reduce nausea and vomiting if your child has these side effects.

#### Possible Side Effects, continued

- Trouble urinating This can be related to the surgery, the anesthesia given during surgery or the epidural pain medicine. If your child has trouble urinating, he or she may need extra liquids, medicine or a temporary Foley catheter placed in the bladder to help him urinate. This problem usually goes away in 24 to 48 hours.
- "Heavy" or "tingly" feeling in the legs This feeling will go away after the epidural pain medicine wears off.

## What to Expect While your Child Has an Epidural Catheter

- The epidural catheter will be connected by tubing to a pump which gives your child a continuous infusion of pain medicine.
- Your child will have tape on his back to hold the epidural catheter in place.
- Your child may also be placed on a special monitor to help watch for side effects.
- Your child will be watched carefully by the nursing staff for any side effects of the pain medicine. If you feel your child is having any unwanted effects of the medicine, please tell your nurse.
- The nurse will check your child often to see if the medicine is effective in relieving your child's pain.
- An anesthesiologist will visit you and your child each day while the epidural is in place.
- Your child may lie on his back if he wishes while the epidural catheter is in place (Picture 1).



**Picture 1** Your child may lie on his back with the catheter in place.

- Do not let the tape over the epidural catheter get wet when your child bathes. If the tape becomes loose or wet, tell your nurse immediately. **Do not** change the dressing yourself.
- Your doctor or nurse will let you know when your child can be held, sit up in a chair or walk. With your doctor's approval, these activities can be done while the epidural is in place. If your child's legs feel heavy or tingly, he or she will need extra help getting up. Be sure to check with your nurse before helping your child get up.
- Make sure the side rails are up when the child is in bed.

## **Removing the Epidural Catheter**

- The epidural catheter will be taken out by an anesthesiologist before your child goes home.
- The tape and catheter will be removed from your child's back and a Band-Aid® may be put over the spot where the catheter went into the skin.
- If your child has pain after the epidural catheter is removed, another type of pain medicine will be given.
- Your child's legs may continue to feel "heavy" or "tingly" for several hours after the epidural catheter is removed until the medicine wears off.
- If your child needs pain medicine or continues to have side effects after he goes home, call your child's surgeon.

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